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Dayton, Ohio Education & Industries: Getting to the Source of the Problem

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Dayton, Ohio Education & Industries: Getting to the Source of the Problem

Writing Process

After researching the history of industries in Dayton, Ohio and examining the current economic characteristics, I wanted to know how Dayton was being proactive and planning to make changes. I interviewed a director from Ruskin Elementary and learned about how they are conditioning children to improve the future economy of Dayton and industries.

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Dayton, Ohio Education & Industries: Getting to the Source of the Problem

How Early Childhood Education Affects the Future of Industries

ABSTRACT

This research paper discusses the relationship between industries in Dayton, Ohio and early education by taking the example of Ruskin Elementary School. After reviewing the history of industries in Dayton, the demographics, and the economic characteristics, it is evident that Dayton has recently endured many hardships within the economy. I then analyze how Ruskin Elementary is an asset to the neighborhood it resides in as well as to the Dayton community. Ruskin supports students' dreams and fosters community ties. This shows that Ruskin is helping to create a generation of employees in Dayton that will work their hardest towards improvements in the industries which will in turn improve the economy and the lives of many in Dayton. Industry in Dayton, Ohio is on the road to a comeback. At the beginning of this road lies the source of future progress: early childhood education. In the past, industries boomed and Dayton was a hub of innovation and development. After unfortunate events, the city fell into unemployment and poverty. To combat the struggles within one Dayton neighborhood, Ruskin Elementary School is making efforts to inspire and holistically educate their students. Ruskin is contributing to the future of Dayton by conditioning students to be able to make a difference in the community.

The city of Dayton, Ohio, located in Montgomery County, was established in 1796. Soon after the war of 1812, Dayton began developing and establishing businesses including banks, textile mills, and a tobacco factory. Dayton was conveniently connected to Cincinnati and soon became a very prosperous community in Ohio (“Dayton, Ohio”). By the time the late 1800’s rolled around Dayton had become a center for a variety of different industries. In the 1880’s, the National Cash Register Company was opened by John H. Patterson in Dayton (“Dayton, Ohio”). NCR was attributed to developing the groundwork for one of the first modern factory systems and truly became one of America’s first global businesses. Many of the basic aspects of the way that he ran NCR and composed business are still used by companies today. Patterson overall had a huge impact on the American industry as a whole and had a unique approach in which he applied his management techniques to the local Dayton government. The great Dayton flood occurred in 1913 and devastated downtown Dayton. Patterson applied his skills in helping to rebuild the city after the flood significantly damaged it. It was people similar to Patterson that built up large businesses in Dayton and engaged in civic commitment as well that made the Dayton industries so strong (Staley). The U.S economy bloomed post World War II and Dayton’s economy did as well. At the time, Dayton held one of the largest concentrations of General Motors employees. The city was also home to several businesses that later became Fortune 500 companies (Stanley). Later, into the twentieth century, Dayton became well known as home of the Wright Brothers, who were credited for the first flight in a powered airplane (“Dayton, Ohio”).

However, this successful city of Dayton that was booming with many industries and businesses decades ago is unfortunately not the same city that is seen today. As the years went on, these big powerhouse businesses that were once rooted in Dayton, downsized, closed, or

moved elsewhere. General Motors was one significant place where this was seen more recently. General Motors Moraine Assembly employed 5,000 people at one time and it closed its plant in December of 2008 leaving about 1,000 people without work. This had a ripple effect because of how many other companies supplied their products to General Motors. This forced those suppliers to eventually downsize or shut down completely as well, causing the loss of hundreds of more jobs (Kavanagh). Since the beginning of the 1970's, close to 1,5000 manufacturing jobs were lost by people employed by NCR ("Dayton, Ohio").

It is clear that Dayton has seen a significant decline in its economy and deterioration in the prominent industries that it once had. Although this is the case, there are still industries and companies that Dayton is proud of today. The five biggest industries that can be seen in Dayton today are aerospace, human sciences & health care, information technology, advanced materials & manufacturing, and water. The highest growth can be seen throughout these five industries. Within the human sciences & health care industry, Dayton has two local healthcare networks including Premier Health Partners and Kettering Medical Network, which employ 15,300 people in total. Dayton is also home to Wright Patterson Air Force Base, which is used as a center for development and research in the aerospace industry while employing 21,000. Other businesses include Reynolds & Reynolds, LexisNexis and Reed Elsevier. It is important to learn from the Dayton's history in order to improve it and change it for the future (Top Employers in the Dayton Area). Dayton is home to a variety of industries that contribute to the economy, which provides a number of jobs to people in the city of Dayton, as well as draws in people from other areas to conduct research and business. Some of the bigger employers of these industries include the Wright-Patterson Air Force base, Premier Health Partners, and LexisNexis ("Top Employers in the Dayton Area").

It is also important to analyze the economic characteristics of Dayton. The 2015 median household income in the city of Dayton is \$27,683 ("Dayton, OH"). As shown in **Figure 1**, this is extremely low compared to the 2015 yearly median household incomes of the United States, the State of Ohio, Montgomery County, and even the Dayton Metro Area as a whole, which are all over \$43,000. The reason for this discrepancy is because of the high poverty rate in Dayton specifically. The percentage of residents with income below poverty level in Dayton is 38.4% while in Ohio is 19.3% ("Dayton, Ohio (OH) Poverty Rate Data Information about Poor and Low Income Residents"). Figure 2 shows that yearly income is least in the city of Dayton, and increases towards the suburbs. This also explains why Figure 1 shows a much higher yearly income for the Dayton Metro Area versus Dayton, Ohio itself. However, the situation is currently worsening. According to U.S. Representative and former executive director of The Hunger Alliance, Tony Hall, "this poverty is not just in Dayton, Ohio, it's starting to creep into the suburbs" (Hulsey). The poverty rate is increasing, and therefore, spreading into more parts of Dayton.

Interestingly in contrast, the unemployment rate in Dayton has decreased dramatically over the past few years. In 2010 the rate was 13.2% and just four years later in 2014, the rate fell to 4.8% (Hulsey). Unfortunately, this isn't good news for Dayton for two main reasons. One part of the explanation for this unemployment rate decrease is, "even though employment has rebounded, wages have fallen" (Hulsey). After so many people were left jobless after major manufacturing industries moved out of Dayton, people were desperate for any job they could find so that they could support themselves and their families. For a while, it is clear by the very high unemployment rate in 2010 that people were not able to find jobs right away. That being said, wages dropped dramatically because so many people were seeking some sort of income,

even if they knew they should be getting paid more, because it was their only option. The second major reason that the unemployment rate decreased so dramatically was because of the fact that, “when people stop looking for jobs, they’re no longer considered in the labor force and are left out of calculations for the unemployment rate” (Hulsey). This explains why the unemployment rate is so low, yet the poverty rate is so high. Many of the people living below the poverty level have been unable to find a job for so long that they are considered to be no longer searching for employment, and are not included in this statistic. To summarize, the city of Dayton has a huge poverty issue that is spreading into the suburbs. Although there has been a drastic decline in the unemployment rate, this does not signify a positive change because of the two main reasons that caused the decrease. These reasons are lower wages and citizens that are not considered because they have been searching for employment for so long or have fallen into poverty and are not currently seeking work.

One community within Dayton that specifically struggles with poverty along with drugs and crime is the Twin Towers neighborhood. Just east of the city of Dayton, this neighborhood possesses an important asset, Ruskin Elementary School. I interviewed Emily Gray, head librarian and director of many programs at Ruskin. One program at Ruskin is designed to spark inspiration in young students to obtain higher education and develop strong bonds with the community. This relates to how the future generation of Dayton citizens will hopefully improve industries within the community, and decrease poverty levels. This program is called “Miracle Makers” and takes place every Monday through Friday from 2:00 pm to 5:00 pm and is offered to Kindergarteners through 6th graders. Approximately 180 students a year partake in the program, which serves as a bridge from the school day to the after school day. According to Mrs. Gray, Miracle Makers was started 20 years ago as an answer to the question, “how do we give

our children dreams?” This program was then implemented to give children access to things that they are not able to experience due to limitations of the neighborhood or their families. For example, through this program, students are able to participate in “Q the Music” through a partnership with the Dayton Philharmonic Orchestra where children are provided free instrument lessons for 3 years along with free instruments. This shows how a student with a talent in music for example, may realize their dream through a program like this even if their family could not afford lessons or instruments. Miracle Makers provides students with hands-on learning and opportunities to explore their passions. Through surveys given to teachers and parents, it is evident that compared to the students who did not participate in Miracle Makers, the children that did saw growth in reading, math, engagement in class, homework completion, ability to focus, social skills, and more developed problem solving abilities. In addition, Miracle Makers students are also educated on health and wellbeing by acknowledging the importance of both mental and physical health. Lastly, the Miracle Makers program encompasses family engagement components. The goal is to “empower parents to take ownership of their child’s education and give them opportunities to contribute” according to Mrs. Gray. She also added her own opinion about the program by saying, “I think that we’ve helped kids connect to some passions and dreams that they wouldn’t otherwise know how to find.”

I then asked Mrs. Gray about other programs or events that are implemented at Ruskin that would further show how Ruskin is an asset to the Twin Towers community. Although there were many, Mrs. Gray named a few examples such as the “Monthly Family Night” event. Through grant funding and donations, a monthly event is hosted at Ruskin in which a free dinner is provided to anyone in the community, not exclusively Ruskin families. She said the reason for this event is that “it builds a strong connection to the school and stronger neighborhood ties.” In

addition to this, Ruskin also allows Veritas Community Church and the Twin Towers Association to use their facilities to encourage participation within the community and foster a social neighborhood. Ruskin also has a special needs program so that everyone in the community can receive an education, regardless of a disability. Another important program in place at Ruskin is the Collegiate Tutor Volunteers. Through this program, college student volunteers are placed in classrooms to tutor children and provide help to teachers. By returning to the same classroom throughout the semester, the tutors are able to form bonds with the students and inspire them to achieve a higher education like they have. This allows children to feel excitement about learning and attending college in the future. Through these many examples, it is evident that Ruskin Elementary is an asset to the Twin Towers community and to Dayton in general.

Ruskin clearly offers many benefits to the Twin Towers community, but how does Ruskin play into the growth of the industries of Dayton? First, it is important to examine how Ruskin helps combat the challenges of the Twin Towers community because these problems relate to the future generation of industry workers. As stated before, one of the major issues in the neighborhood and in Dayton overall, is drug use. Through the Miracle Makers Program, students are educated on mental and physical health and wellbeing. This proactively prevents children from abusing drugs in the future. By receiving education on the importance of health and how drugs affect wellbeing, Ruskin is doing their part in drug prevention. In addition, the family engagement components of the program are beneficial to students that may be struggling with their home lives. This program allows students to spend quality time with their families in a safe environment, which may also help keep them on a healthy path. Crime is also an issue in the community, and by creating these “neighborhood ties” as Mrs. Gray stated, these students are becoming more involved within their neighborhood. Because of this, the children are less likely

to want to disrespect their community with vandalism or violence. All of this demonstrates how Ruskin helps contest the issues throughout the Twin Towers community, which also contributes to solving Dayton's problems as a whole.

Furthermore, it is evident that Ruskin strives to provide children with opportunities and inspirations. This is why Ruskin is important to the future of Dayton industries. According to the source, *Education Matters: Why Good Public Schools Are Important to All of Us*, "good public schools give [the youth] the tools they need to become strong, contributing citizens and to compete in a challenging, global economy, where perhaps now more than ever education is a key to opportunity and success." Through the Miracle Makers program, Ruskin is supporting academic and developmental growth. They also strive to inspire a desire of higher education in their students. Because of this, Ruskin is contributing the next generation of workers that will be able to improve industries and decrease the poverty rate. They will be able to create the future success of the Dayton economy. Through their goal to give children access to things that they are not able to experience due to limitations of the neighborhood or their families, they are getting to the source of the problem. Using aspirations to inspire children makes them more likely to accomplish great things because they are self-motivated, rather than told by their families or teachers that it's what they should do. The efforts Ruskin makes to inspire a higher education in their students will especially be helpful in the future Dayton industries because growing fields require a college degree. According to an article in the *Dayton Daily News* published in 2016, "jobs grounded in science and technology continue to grow in the Dayton area, with auto part manufacturing leading the way with a nearly 10 percent increase in employment the past two years" (Gnau). This shows the importance of Dayton citizens obtaining a higher education so that they can take advantage of these careers and avoid contributing to the poverty rate.

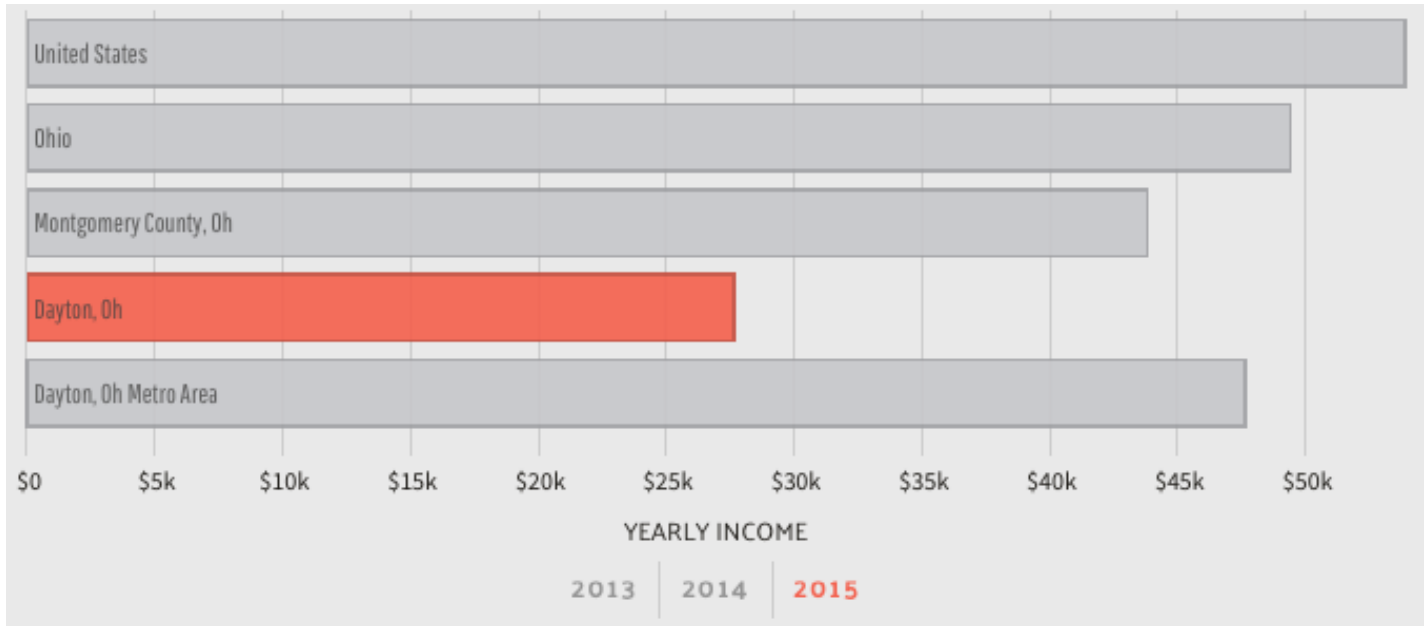
Although studies show that poverty is still growing within Dayton, schools like Ruskin are beginning the change. Emily Gray noted that although the Miracle Makers program has been around for 20 years, they have just started implementing actions that are designed to aid the future adults in the economy they will be emerging into. This way, they will be prepared and able to change it for the better. However, what can be done about the fact that wages are still lower than normal for specialized jobs? This problem can be solved with more jobs, meaning more employers establishing themselves in Dayton again like they had in the past. According to Scott Koorndyk, executive vice president of economic development for the 14-county Dayton Development Coalition, "we are in the middle of the nation and in an area that is growing more quickly" (Bennish). Although this article was published in 2012, it still signifies that Dayton was and still is in the process of growth, although it may be under the surface, since changes of this scale take time. In the years to come, it is expected to see more employment opportunities in Dayton industries develop due to the fact that schools like Ruskin are conditioning future employees to be dedicated workers with a vision for a better Dayton.

Overall, Dayton has a bright future because of the efforts being made to enlighten the next generation of industry employees. Dayton's current state may not reflect the initiatives being taken to restore its past industry diversity; however, time will reveal the efforts. Ruskin Elementary is just one of the many assets of Dayton that strive to create a better future for Dayton industries, and in turn, the economy. This is done by both keeping kids on a healthy pathway free of drugs and violence, and also by encouraging them to achieve a higher education. In fact, Jay Williams, U.S. assistant secretary for economic development, stated that "from a national standpoint, we look at the southwest Ohio region as a model for other communities to position themselves, who have gone through that same decline and restructuring" (Larsen). In

other words, Dayton's past hardships may have made the community come together to evaluate what needed to be done and how to take action. Because of this, the community is better prepared for the future and can inspire other communities to look past the decline and focus on recreation.

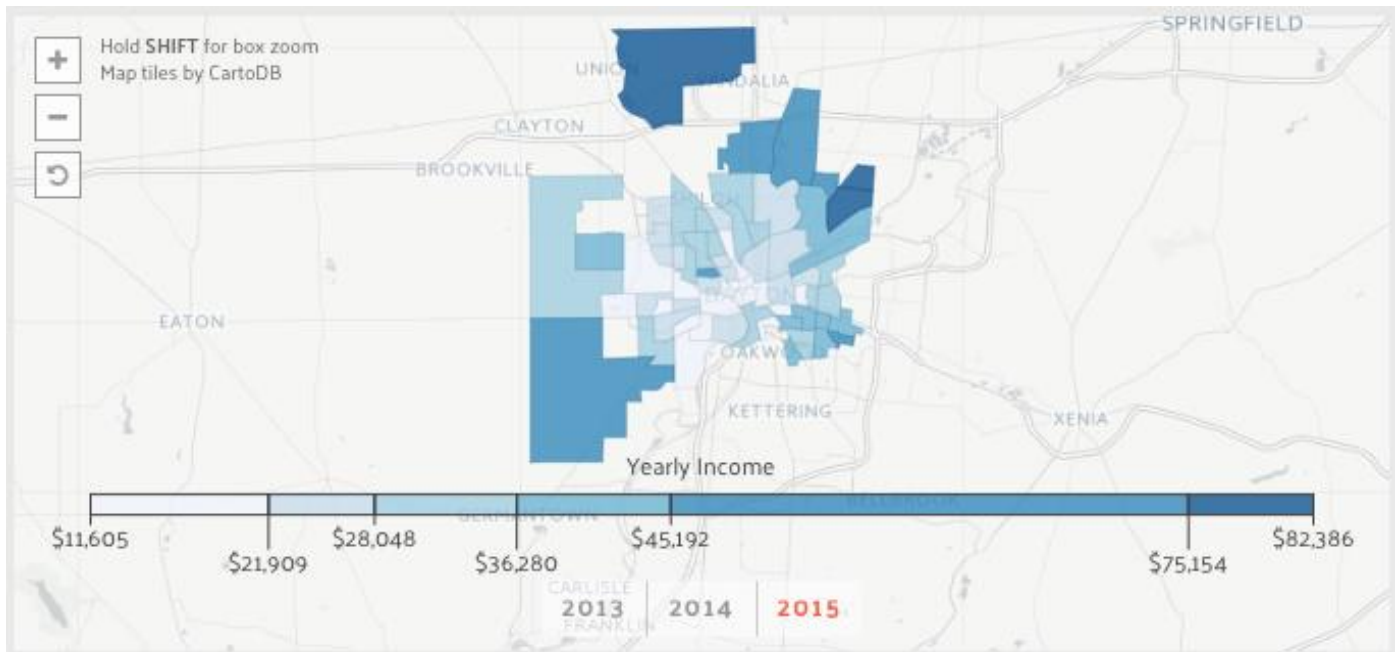
Appendix

Figure 1



"Dayton, OH." *Data USA*. N.p., n.d. Web. 28 Apr. 2017.

Figure 2



"Dayton, OH." *Data USA*. N.p., n.d. Web. 28 Apr. 2017.

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